

**WALTON ON THE HILL  
CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**



**ADOPTED MARCH 2017**

## WALTON ON THE HILL CONSERVATION AREA

### 1. Introduction

#### Definition

- 1.1 Section 69 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local planning authorities to determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate those areas as conservation areas. Local planning authorities are obliged to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and in exercising their planning powers to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

#### Purpose of Appraisal

- 1.2 Conservation Area Appraisal is a means of identifying and assessing the special architectural or historic character of a place. Walton on the Hill Conservation Area was designated on 3 March 1977 by Staffordshire County Council after an appraisal of the special architectural and historic interest of the area. Under section 69 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 it is a requirement of the local planning authority to update conservation area appraisals regularly, and designate further areas as necessary. The purpose of this appraisal is to assess and define the special character and appearance of Walton on the Hill Conservation Area as it stands today, and identify any current or anticipated future threats to the area's character and integrity.
- 1.3 Appraisal ensures that the local authority, developers, property owners and the local community are aware of the area's special character when drawing up and assessing proposals for change.

#### Effects of Conservation Area Designation

- 1.4 The conservation area appraisal will be adopted as a "material consideration" in the planning process. It will be used by the local planning authority when considering the effects of any proposed development affecting the conservation area, including its setting and also in addressing the special duty regarding the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 1.5 Certain works in a Conservation Area require consent:
- Planning permission must be obtained from the local planning authority prior to the substantial or total demolition of any building or structure within a Conservation Area (with some exceptions)
  - Permitted Development Rights, i.e. those works of alteration or extension that can be carried out without planning permission, are slightly different in

conservation areas. Some conservation areas are covered by Article 4 Directions, which restrict certain Permitted Development Rights, for example the installation of uPVC windows or satellite dishes. These are specific to each conservation area, and are in place to ensure the special historic and architectural character is protected. The Borough Council will consider whether the provisions of an article 4 direction would be beneficial to the protection of Walton on the Hill Conservation Area.

- Any proposal to lop, top or fell a tree above a certain size in a conservation area, even if the tree is not protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), must be notified to the local planning authority at least six weeks before commencing work. This gives the local planning authority the opportunity to make a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) if the tree is considered to be important.



School Lane

### Community Involvement

- 1.6 Stafford Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement sets out to ensure that all sections of the community and interested parties have a reasonable opportunity to engage with plan-making and planning application processes. A public consultation took place between 4 July and 12 August 2016 and a public exhibition was held at Walton Village Hall on 13 July 2016. Letters were sent to all properties within the conservation area and to key stakeholders and other interested parties, inviting comment. The draft appraisal was made public via the Borough's website, or in paper form. All representations were then considered and any amendments made to the text of the Appraisal and proposed boundary revisions.

### Planning Policy Context

- 1.7 National planning policy relevant to Walton on the Hill Conservation Area:
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Section 12 relates to conserving and enhancing the historic environment and paragraphs 127-141 are relevant to Walton on the Hill Conservation Area.
  - Historic England's Good Practice Advice (GPA) notes 1,2,3 (2015) is the national conservation guidance to support the NPPF policies.

## 1.8 Local planning policy relevant to Walton on the Hill Conservation Area:

- Local planning policy is contained within The Plan for Stafford Borough (adopted 2014). Section 12 *Environment* contains policies relevant to Walton on the Hill Conservation Area: Policies N1: Design; N8: Landscape Character; N9: Historic Environment and paragraphs 12.45-12.56.
- Berkswich Village Design Statement prepared by the Parish Council and accepted by the Borough Council in 2006 as a material planning consideration encompasses the conservation area within its advice.

## 2. Summary of Special Interest, Walton on the Hill Conservation Area

2.1 Walton on the Hill Conservation Area was designated by Staffordshire County Council in 1977 as a means of preserving and enhancing the special architectural and historic interest that has been retained and enriched through its development over the centuries. The key elements of this special character are summarised as follows:

- An ancient settlement with origins dating back to Anglo-Saxon times.
- A well preserved village retaining much of its historical and architectural form and character around an historic road layout.
- Contains buildings of historical and architectural significance with one listed at grade II.
- A variety of building types and styles including the 19th century church, alongside more modest houses, cottages and former agricultural buildings.
- A low density of development related informally to the village roads with most properties set in attractive garden plots.
- Use of local building materials such as red brick and Staffordshire blue clay roof tiles.
- A distinct rural feel created by narrow unkerbed lanes with grass verges often bounded by brick and stone walls overtopped with hedges.
- An absence of traffic.
- An absence of highway signage, road markings and other visual clutter.
- A wealth of mature trees.
- Glimpsed views over adjacent countryside.

2.2 Comparison with older photographs and maps shows how the village has retained its historic character and appearance little changed over the last century.

### **3 Location and Topography**

- 3.1 Walton on the Hill lies approximately 3 miles SE of Stafford above the A513 road to Rugeley and Lichfield. As the name implies it occupies an elevated position lying at approximately 109 m (360 ft) OD. overlooking the Penk Valley to the north and Cannock Chase to the east.
- 3.2 Topographically the conservation area falls into two distinct parts. To the west is the village centre, residential in character and grouped informally around a triangle of lanes. The ground falls north-eastwards into a shallow valley down towards the Church of St Thomas and to the cross roads by the lane to Brocton.
- 3.3 The eastern area rises from the cross roads towards the ridge by Walton Farm. The area is bisected by a narrow unmade track running between the high brick walls of the farm and former gardens to Walton Bury (now known as Oakover Grange). The sudden transition from the enclosed space of the track to open farmland and panoramic views at the ridge is one of the more surprising features of the conservation area.

### **4 History and development**

#### Archaeological background

- 4.1 There are no known archaeological sites within or immediately adjacent to the conservation area nor have there been any chance finds of artefacts indicative of medieval or earlier activity.

#### Historical development and relationship to current layout

- 4.2 The earliest historical reference to Walton is in an Anglo-Saxon charter of pre-Norman conquest date.
- 4.3 At the time of the Domesday Book in 1088 Walton formed part of the manor of Bercheswic (Baswich) a property owned by the Bishop of Chester. Four smallholders were registered in the village holding two ploughs; there were four acres of meadow and woodland measured at one and a half leagues long and one league wide (a league was approximately a mile and half in current measurement).
- 4.4 It is likely that at this time Walton lay in a clearing of Cannock Chase, as the boundaries of the forest area were reported by a contemporary topographer as extending as far as the River Penk at Radford bridge until the seventeenth century.



First edition OS map 1886

- 4.5 It is not currently known where the Anglo- Saxon or Norman settlement was located although it is reasonable to assume it was close the present centre of the village on the hilltop.
- 4.6 Walton (the suffix *on the Hill* was only added circa 1900 being derived from the large house on the site of the present Village Gardens) has been part of the parish of Berkswich since at least the time of Domesday. Walton was always the principal settlement in the parish but remained essentially a hamlet until the twentieth century. Although the parish church of Holy Trinity has occupied its site off the present Baswich Lane in the north west corner of the parish since medieval times there was no significant settlement there until the mid twentieth century.
- 4.7 The basic layout of the hamlet along the road from the top of The Rise and forking by the Pound towards the church or the cross roads near the village pump was evidently established by the early years of the eighteenth century. This layout has not altered even though the number of houses (15 are shown in the centre on the 1886 Ordnance Survey map; 16 on the 1902 edition) has increased both within the centre and on surrounding farmland to create the larger community of today.



OS Map 1902

#### 4.8 The most notable changes have been:

- the extension of gardens and building over the triangle of ground between the old Lichfield Road (now the lane leading down to St Thomas' Church and through to School Lane) and the present main route through the village. This was possibly a village "green" (there is a documentary reference to a "green" in the 18<sup>th</sup> century). The village pound still occupies one corner of this land.
- The diversion of the Stafford to Lichfield main road, which formerly ran through the village, to a new "by-pass" (the present Lichfield Road) some time between 1812 and 1820 avoiding the steep climbs up Walton Bank (now The Rise) and the sharp turns past towards School Lane.
- The infilling of vacant land alongside the historic road layout with new housing from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards.
- The erection of much new housing on farmland immediately adjacent to the village in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century affecting its setting.
- The redevelopment of the gardens of some larger properties at Walton Bury (now Oakover Grange), Walton Bury and Walton Lodge.



OS Map 1938 showing newly erected housing adjoining the village centre

4.9 Notwithstanding the amount of development which has occurred in and especially around Walton over the past century the present village still strongly retains the physical and visual character of the historic hamlet. Two distinct reminders of this historic past are the survival of the centrally placed village pinfold opposite the smithy and the cast iron village pump in its blue brick paved niche beside the road further down the lane.



## 5. Spatial analysis

- 5.1 The conservation area comprises five distinct divisions: the western entrance to The Village from the junction with Oldcroft Road; the historic village centre around the Pinfold; the area around the church and the approach from School Lane; the eastern end around the track to Walton Farm; and the eastern entrance from Brocton Lane.
- 5.2 The principal approach to the conservation area is from the west. There is a sharp transition from the more suburban character of The Rise into the informal curvature of The Village. The road is framed on its south side by an unkerbed grass verge backed by tall hedges screening the front gardens of individual detached and semi-detached houses. The north side is framed by a long run of stone and brick walling mostly rising direct from the carriageway and overtopped by hedges. Few houses are readily visible behind the dense canopy of shrubbery.
- 5.3 Within the village centre the roads narrow but are again flanked by unkerbed grass verges or stone walls directly abutting the carriageway. The few older houses are positioned either close to the road edge or at informal angles to the road. More recent housing has tended to be set parallel to the road. The prevailing impression is of spaciousness with all properties enjoying generous garden space around them. Again many of the houses are well concealed behind shrubbery and do not impinge directly in views through the area.
- 5.4 Towards the church and into School Lane the character of the conservation changes again. The lanes narrow further and are heavily overshadowed by the trees of the churchyard or dense hedges of surrounding domestic

gardens. The road edges are defined by brick and stone walls. The tall retaining walls to the former Walton Lodge and the counterpoint of the hedges around the Old School and the Old Vicarage give particular emphasis to the approach along School Lane. The few houses in this part of the village are well hidden by the density of tree and hedge cover.



Stone walls and hedges by the church

5.5 The eastern part of the village is less developed than the village centre with a greater sense of space around its buildings. It is bisected by a narrow unmade track to Walton Farm, running enclosed between the high brick boundary wall of the rambling Edwardian Walton Bury (now Oakover Grange) and the wall around the interesting old farm yard. The brick boundary walls are a key visual feature in this part of the conservation area.

5.6 The track runs up to a gateway on the crest of the ridge, where the previously confined space suddenly gives way to open fields and panoramic views of the Penk Valley, the slopes of Shugborough Park and Cannock Chase. A higher number of mature trees give it a more wooded aspect. Of particular note are the numerous fine mature maple and pine trees in the grounds of Walton Lodge and the dense tree and shrub growth in the grounds of Walton Bury.



Brocton Lane

5.7 The eastern approach into the conservation area along Brocton Lane is attractively rural in nature. Although the mid twentieth century housing of Walton Heights can be glimpsed to the south the single track, unkerbed lane is bounded by a tall established hedgerow against farmland on its north side

before curving into a tunnel of overhanging trees as it skirts the edge of Oakover Grange (formerly Walton Bury) and Hollybush Field. There is a strong element of surprise as the canopy opens out where the lane passes the modern development of Waltonbury Close and the wider grass banked verge alongside the village school. The large sycamore tree on the corner of Cedar Way is a key feature in this part of the conservation area.

## **6. Built Character**

- 6.1 Walton on the Hill today is entirely a residential settlement although some evidence of its earlier farming history is still apparent in the converted farm buildings at Walton Farm. With the exception of Nos 11-13 and No 14 The Village (17<sup>th</sup> century) and Congreve House (early 18<sup>th</sup> century), the majority of buildings in Walton on the Hill appear to be nineteenth century or later date. The nineteenth century development varies between larger houses such as Walton Bury or the Old Vicarage and the more widespread scatter of small scale brick and tile cottages. Twentieth century development ranges between detached houses of individual design but typical of their period occupying infill plots and small estates of properties of broadly homogenous design within the former gardens of larger, now demolished houses.

### Building types

- 6.2 The vast majority of buildings in Walton on the Hill both historically and more recent are domestic in use. A few (for example the former stables to the Old Vicarage now itself in residential use or the pumphouse at Congreve House) are ancillary domestic.
- 6.3 The only exceptions historically were the Church of St Thomas, the former infants school, later Village Institute and now a private house in School Lane, the former smithy attached to No 14 The Village, and the farmyard complex of threshing barn and byres at Walton Farm, now converted to residential use.

### Scale, plot size and plan form

- 6.4 The majority of 19<sup>th</sup> century and older buildings in the conservation area are of one and half or two storeys, the former often having dormers projecting through the eaves to serve upstairs rooms. Only the Church of St Thomas, the Old Vicarage, and Walton Bury, the latter now much enlarged and converted to apartments are of a larger scale.
- 6.5 Historically the typical plan form of domestic building was rectangular with the main accommodation housed beneath a roof span of approximately 15 to 20 feet (3- 4.5 metres). This can be seen at No 14 The Village probably the oldest surviving structure or Nos 11-13 of near contemporary date. This simple linear form (dictated by the span of available timber for roof construction) was followed in most 19<sup>th</sup> century development, for example the row of cottages Nos 17, 21 and 23 The Village near the Pinfold, erected incrementally before 1845, or the house now known as No 38, The Springs

erected between 1845 and 1886. Earlier houses were often set at a slight angle to the road. This informality contributes strongly to the special character of the conservation area.

- 6.6 Where additional accommodation was required this was provided by a new wing at right angles to the main range. Examples can be seen at Congreve House or 11-13 The Village.
- 6.7 Pairs of semi-detached cottages appear in the village from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. These include Nos 26 and 28 The Village, recently extended, and Nos 5 and 7 of 1905. Both followed the historic pattern with a main roof ridge parallel to the road; Nos 26 and 28 have large gables toward the front.



- 6.8 Mid and later 20<sup>th</sup> century development within the village tended to follow the form of earlier building with two storey detached houses ridged parallel to the road. Some have hipped roofs as at Nos 8, 10 and 24 The Village. Single storey bungalow type development is not characteristic of the conservation area; of the two examples No 16 the Village has been considerably enlarged. No 18 was originally of striking asymmetrically gabled form but has since been remodelled as an orthodox pitched roof dwelling.
- 6.9 Walton has evolved gradually over time and the layout of individual holdings and plots does not (as in some settlements) follow a distinctive pattern. The earlier houses were all set in deep plots extending back from the highway (e.g. No 14 The Village or Congreve House). 19<sup>th</sup> century houses were also set in large gardens. Mid 20<sup>th</sup> century development broadly followed the pattern of detached houses set in large plots. These, for example Nos 2 -12 The Village, are generally set back behind sizeable front gardens (unlike earlier housing which was generally set close to the carriageway) with their rear boundaries following earlier field edges. This pattern contributes to and retains the spacious character of the conservation area.
- 6.10 Later 20<sup>th</sup> century housing is also set within generous plots although for the most part the developments occupy the former garden land of larger, older properties, some now demolished (e.g Village Gardens, Congreve Close, Walton Lodge, Waltonbury Close).

## Building materials and colour palette

### Walling

- 6.11 The earliest building materials known to have been used in Walton are the timber framing evident externally in No14 The Village and recorded internally in Nos 11-13. The timber frames would originally have been infilled with wattle and daub, but at some time in the past this was replaced with brick infill panels. It is likely that the timber frames would have been left either untreated or possibly limewashed continuously with the infill panels. By the later 19<sup>th</sup> century No 14 had assumed the “black and white” colour scheme it still has today.
- 6.12 The predominant walling material in later historic times was orangey-red handmade brick, no doubt of local manufacture. This can be seen on houses such as Congreve House (late 17<sup>th</sup> century) through to the buildings at Walton Farm (circa 1800), the Old Vicarage (circa 1840), the former Infants School in School Lane (circa. 1850), Nos 26 and 28 The Village (after 1840) and the prominent garden walls to Walton Bury or the now demolished house once known as Walton on the Hill at the top of The Rise.
- 6.13 Sandstone is a naturally occurring material in the locality (there were important quarries at Tixall) but was not used as a principal building material in Walton. It was, however, extensively used in either dressed form (squared blocks) or less frequently as rubblestone for boundary walls alongside the highway. There are significant runs of stone wall throughout The Village contributing greatly to the special character of the conservation area for example in the frontage of Village Gardens; from Nos 5-7 to 11-13 and from The Pound as far as No 18.
- 6.14 Twentieth century developments have tended to continue the use of brickwork generally reflecting the tones of earlier materials. Some brickwork is of a more regular machine made texture (Village Gardens, Walton Bury and Walton Lodge for example) although the tendency in recent years has been to revert to the softer textures and profiles of earlier hand-made products. The pale buff brick at No 18 The Village presents a contrast to the predominant reds and oranges. This befits a building originally of unconventional form but wider use of contrasting brick is not to be encouraged. St Thomas’ Church is built of a blue brindle brick but the very distinctive form of the building and its detached position within the churchyard help integrate it into the overall landscape of the village.
- 6.15 A trend of the later twentieth century was to colourwash or render and colourwash earlier brickwork and even in some instances (Puffin Lodge, No 9 The Village) to paint the brickwork from new. The flashes of colour arising from this practice give visual variation to buildings in the village and may reflect the long abandoned Midlands practice of limewashing walls annually. However it is not a practice to be encouraged creating as it does a need for

regular maintenance if the property is to look presentable. In some cases the use of non-breathable renders and coatings can cause harm to older fabric.

### Roofing

- 6.16 Historically thatch was used as a roofing material locally. Older photographs show No 14 The Village with a thatched roof until the 1960s. Regrettably when the thatch was removed from No 14 The Village in the 1960s it too was replaced with interlocking concrete tiles which are not in keeping with the age or character of the historic building. It is likely Nos 11-13 The Village which also have the steep roof pitch associated with thatch were similarly clad once.
- 6.17 The principal roofing material used since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards (viz Congreve House) has been clay plain tile often, especially on 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, of the hardwearing Staffordshire blue type. Nos 27-29 The Village have a very distinctive roof of scallop pattern Staffordshire blues. Later 19<sup>th</sup> century and much twentieth century housing continued to use clay plain tiles (a bright red variation of the "Rosemary" type was used on Nos 5 and 7 The Village) but late 20<sup>th</sup> century estate developments (Village Gardens, Waltonbury Close) have tended to use an out of character interlocking concrete tile.



- 6.18 Despite the proximity of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal to Walton which would have given ease of access for Welsh slate it appears only to have been used once in the conservation area, on the Old Vicarage.

### Windows

- 6.19 Historically and until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century windows were predominantly of timber construction of side hung type. Some properties appear to have had wrought iron casements set in timber frames but these were mostly replaced by the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. Until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century glass could only be produced in small panes and windows were divided by either timber glazing bars or lead kames. Few examples of early small paned windows survive in Walton although several of the older houses have modern replicas of historic patterns to maintain their original character. Technological developments in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century introduced stronger sheet glass creating the opportunity for much larger plain glazed windows. The larger plate glazed windows of the Old Vicarage reflect an early use of the new technology.

6.20 Modern changes in technology and a greater emphasis on the thermal performance of buildings has led to the extensive replacement of historic and historic pattern windows with new fenestration of uPVC manufacture. Although many of these have attempted to replicate the pattern of older windows their very different character and detailing immediately differentiate them from older windows and diminish the character of the conservation area

## 7. Significant Buildings in the Conservation Area

### Listed buildings

7.1 At the time of publication of this appraisal document there is only one listed building within the conservation area.

### 14 The Village

7.2 No 14 The Village (known variously in the past as The Smithy or the Post Office) is a timber framed building of 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century date of one and half storeys in height now with painted brick infill between the framing. Originally thatched the building currently has a mid 20<sup>th</sup> century roof of concrete interlocking tiles which are not in keeping with the character of the house or the conservation area. The property is in good condition but it would be desirable when the roof covering next needs renewal to reinstate with materials more sympathetic to the its character and setting. (A copy of the list description is given at appendix 1).



c.1930-40



2016

## Other significant buildings

### The Old Smithy



- 7.3 The former village smithy appears to date from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is an attractive brick-built structure beneath Staffordshire blue clay plain tiled roof with a front facing gable highlighting the main entrance. Although a simple workshop building it has much attractive detailing including an elaborate corbelled brick eaves, oversailing gable verges and corbelled end chimney stack. The building provides a clear reminder of the conservation area's rural past.

### The Old School, School Lane



- 7.4 This attractive red brick building was erected in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a row of cottages and adapted as an infants' school. It was subsequently absorbed into the National School lower down the lane and later used as a parish room until adapted back to residential use in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Architecturally it is notable for the steeply pitched roof and pointed window

opening of the schoolroom, the pronounced overhanging gable eaves and the three prominent ridge top chimney stacks.

### Congreve House



- 7.5 Congreve House appears to date from the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is of T plan, of two storeys in brick construction beneath a clay plain tiled roof. The front elevation is symmetrical around a central front door opening directly on to a central stack, an anachronistic arrangement for this date. The gabled porch is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century addition. The historic timber casement windows have been replaced in uPVC in an approximate matching style in recent years. The property is bounded by a mature brick wall with half round stone copings. In the garden is an unusual weather boarded pump house with pyramidal tiled roof.
- 7.6 Congreve House appears originally to have been known as Manor Farm and to have been the home farm to the adjacent but now demolished property latterly known as Walton on the Hill. Sir William Congreve (1772–1828), Comptroller of the Royal Laboratory, Woolwich (1814–28), was born here. His son William, the second baronet Congreve, invented the Congreve rocket and brimstone matches.

## Nos 11-13 The Village



2016



Circa 1900

- 7.7 Nos 11-13 are picturesquely sited at an oblique angle to and directly abutting the lane. They form an L shaped property with a main range of one and a half storeys beneath steeply pitched roof with a lower front wing which projects towards the road and is partly footed on a natural rock outcrop. Although clad in brick since at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and now painted, nos. 11 and 13 were formerly one timber-framed house possibly of 17<sup>th</sup> century origins. In the 1950s the property was noted as retaining original beams, a large fireplace, and a four-centred door head.

### Church of St Thomas

- 7.8 The most distinctive building in the conservation area is the blue brindle brick church of St. Thomas, built to a design by Thomas Trubshaw in 1842. It stands on the north slope of the hill on which the village stands. The impressive massing of its steeply pitched nave and transept roofs, the low tower and distinctive chevron ornamented spire rising dominant above the surrounding yew and lime tree hedge of the churchyard, make it a most prominent landmark both in the village and a wider surrounding area. The view of the church from the direction of the pound, seen framed between the gable end of No. 13 The Village, and a large holly tree opposite, is especially noteworthy. The surrounding churchyard with its encompassing line of yew and lime trees forms an attractive green open space in the centre of the conservation area.



### The Old Vicarage.

- 7.9 The Old Vicarage was built in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century to serve the newly built church. The building has been altered in recent years and part of its formerly extensive garden built over. The building still retains a slated roof and distinctive array of paired brick chimney stacks, an attractive detail in the conservation area glimpsed both from School Lane and the churchyard.



The Old Vicarage before recent alterations

### Nos 27-29 The Village.

- 7.10 Originally built in cottage orné style in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (it is shown on an 1845 map of the parish) this colour washed building has since been considerably extended losing its original proportions. It still retains some lattice pattern cast iron windows on the ground floor and a distinctive roof with bands of scalloped and plain Staffordshire blue roof tiles. The clusters of

hexagonal red brick chimney stacks surmounted by “bishop” pattern buff fireclay pots are a notable feature in this part of the village.



## 8. Public Realm

- 8.1 Although now a dormitory settlement for Stafford by virtue of its proximity to the town and the extent of housing development around the historic core over the last half century Walton on the Hill conservation area still retains the character and appearance of a rural village. This is largely due to the low density of development in the conservation area but equally to the survival of grass verges flanking the roads; an absence of kerbs and segregated footpaths, modern and intrusive street signage or road markings and a minimum of carefully positioned and designed street lighting.



## Boundary treatment

### a) Walls

- 8.2 An important part of the character of the conservation area is the number of mature stone or brick boundary walls which directly flank the carriageway of the lanes leading through the village.
- 8.3 The stone examples are mostly built of dressed, squared local sandstone: some are in coursed rubble. A number are attractively overtopped by established hedges such as the sequence along the south side of The Village or around the churchyard which help define views through the village. Most of the stone walls have dressed stone copings; some are now capped with old blue brick copings.
- 8.4 Good brick boundary walls are to be found around Congreve House and flanking the track leading from the cross roads by The Springs up towards Walton Farm and the public footpath leading to Jacobs Ladder. That on the south of the track, as well as defining its edge, also has historic interest as the surviving garden enclosure for the former walled garden of Walton Bury (now Oakover Grange).



The lane to Walton Farm

- 8.5 Notable examples of good boundary walls are the almost continuous run in brick and stone along north side of The Village fronting Village Gardens, past Congreve House and down as far as No 11 The Village. There are other good examples by the cottages close to the former Pinfold and outside No 14 The Village.

## b) Hedges

- 8.6 A key feature of the conservation area is the extensive planting of hedges either as the principal boundary to the roadside (e.g. alongside Nos 29-31 The Village near the church) or overtopping a boundary wall ( e.g in front of Nos 18 Village Gardens and 1 Congreve Close). Hedging species vary between native varieties such as holly to ornamental shrubs. Together with the unkerbed often grassy verges to the lanes the hedges reinforce the informal rural character of the village.



Unkerbed roadside, grass verges, hedges and boundary walls

## 9. Trees

- 9.1 A significant contributor to the special character of the conservation area are its many trees. For the most part these are ornamental garden or fruit trees within domestic premises but there are a number of major individual specimens such as the scots pine on the corner of Village Gardens; the sycamore on the corner of Brocton Lane; several pine and maple trees in the grounds of Walton Lodge and the lime trees in the churchyard. Some of these are subject to tree preservation orders. There are many good groups of trees such as the many yew trees in the churchyard, and the mixed groups of trees in the grounds of Oakover Grange.



## 10 Historic boundaries and views

- 10.1 As a small hamlet of informal plan and relatively late growth Walton does not possess the ancient and distinctive historic property boundaries often found in bigger long established settlements. Nonetheless comparing contemporary property boundaries to those shown on 19<sup>th</sup> century maps it is clear that the historic framework still survives (even if some plots are now more subdivided) and plays a significant role in defining the special character of the conservation area. This can be seen for example in the still visible definition of the grounds to the former Walton Lodge or Walton Bury despite the construction of self contained housing estates within them or the depth of garden plots on the south side of The Village following long established hedge lines. The brick garden wall to the former kitchen garden of Walton Bury (Oakover Grange) forms a very strong visual feature alongside the unmade track through the eastern end of the conservation area.



View across Penk Valley from Kitlings Lane

- 10.2 Key views within and from the conservation area are shown on fig XXX. Within the conservation area the most significant view is that looking down from the Pinfold towards the tower and spire of St Thomas' church framed between the projecting gable of No 11 The Village and the garden hedges of the cottages opposite.
- 10.3 Other significant views within the area are those looking both up and down the track which forms the spine of the eastern part of the conservation area and along the sweep of garden walls and hedges from Village Gardens eastwards into the village.
- 10.4 Despite being so close to Stafford town there remain significant views of the open countryside of the Penk Valley from within the conservation area recalling the rural origins of the settlement. These include views north-eastward past St Thomas' church and Kitlings Lane towards Tixall Heath; down School Lane; as well as the panoramic views eastwards of Cannock Chase from the ridge by Walton Farm. These glimpsed or more open rural views are an important part of the character of the conservation area.



Cannock Chase from lane to Walton Farm

## 11 Adverse impacts on the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

- 11.1 When the conservation area was first designated in 1977 attention was drawn to the adverse visual impact of overhead telephone and electricity supply cables. Although some have been adapted to accommodate street light fittings, some of mock period style it is unfortunate that the poles and concentrations of heavy cables and insulators remain and continue to have a intrusive detrimental effect on views through the village. Whenever possible the opportunity should be taken to reposition these cables underground.



- 11.2 Some apparatus introduced by statutory undertakers is intrusive in appearance and location. Consideration should be given to screening existing equipment. While it would be desirable to avoid siting such plant within the conservation area but where new work which has unavoidably to be introduced appropriate landscaping should form part of the design process.

### Effects of 20th century development

- 11.3 Due to its position close to Stafford the principal growth of Walton occurred in the 20th century not only with infill development in the village centre but more particularly on former farmland around it. Although still adjoined by extensive agricultural land (e.g. along the eastern boundary of the conservation area) farming is no longer practised within the village and the settlement is now essentially a dormitory residential area of the county town.
- 11.4 Visually the main effects of 20th century development are the increased density of housing in the historic centre through infill building on former garden land or the subdivision of larger properties and the introduction of new styles of design. Fortunately the new developments have been incremental, small scale, generally of individual plots over the century and have not led to an erosion of the special character of the place.

### Introduction of modern materials

- 11.5 New development has generally respected and reflected building materials used historically in Walton: i.e. red or orange brick for walling and small clay plain tile for roofing. There has been a greater use of colour washed render than in the past but not to an extent to change the character of the area. Newer development especially in the small estates erected on larger gardens (Village Gardens, Walton Lodge, Waltonbury Close) have tended to use concrete interlocking tiles for roofing but given the self contained nature of these developments any impact on the overall character of the conservation area has been minimised.
- 11.6 The most significant change is the widespread change from conventional timber windows to the use of double glazed uPVC both in new build housing and as replacements in older properties. While the desire to upgrade thermal performance of properties is fully understood uPVC windows have very different visual characteristics to timber windows with mitred corner construction and a uniform shiny external finish. Window frames are often of thicker proportions (especially noticeable on opening lights) and glazing bars tend to be false planted add-ons). The overall effect is a gradual erosion of the contribution which older window types make to the character of a building and in turn to the overall area. It is pleasing that most new windows in Walton have attempted to replicate the appearance of the older ones they replace but detailed inspection suggests they are unconvincing and lack depth. It is gratifying to note the resubstitution of timber for uPVC windows on one prominently sited house late in 2015.

### Agricultural conversions

- 11.7 Although still surrounded by productive farmland the only farm buildings in the village, the early 19th century Walton Farm had fallen redundant by the 1970s and was adapted to residential use. The conversion successfully retained the architectural character of the red brick former threshing barn and open fronted

hovels. This should be respected and retained in any future works to the buildings.

## **12 Future Action – Protecting the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area**

- 12.1 Any new development should reinforce the character outlined in the summary of special interest and be sympathetic to the historical evolution and character of Walton on the Hill through the consideration of the historic buildings and their setting, the historic layout and street pattern, significant spaces, massing, volume and scale of the existing and proposed buildings and the employment of compatible materials and detailing..
- 12.2 Policies for the protection and management of the historic environment are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraphs 127 through to 141 and in the Plan for Stafford through policies N1, N8 and N9, paragraphs 12.45 to 12.56. These should be used in conjunction with this appraisal to guide or assess any future development within Walton on the Hill Conservation Area. Reference should also be made to the Berkswich Village Design Statement published by the Parish Council.
- 12.3 Other organisations such as the County Council, Highways Authority and statutory undertakers also have their own commitment to protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in the exercise of their duties.
- 12.4 To manage and protect the special historic character and appearance of Walton on the Hill Conservation Area in the exercise of these policies and duties the following should be observed:
- The existing special historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area as set out in this appraisal and all features identified as positive on the Conservation Area Appraisal Map should be retained and reinforced.
  - Further works that harm the significance of the area described in this appraisal should be avoided.
  - Guidance on ‘Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment’ in the Planning Practice Guidance (2014) and Good Practice Advice (GPA) notes 1,2,3 (Historic England, 2015).
  - Existing and emerging design or conservation guidance published by Stafford Borough Council and Historic England (previously English Heritage) should be consulted where relevant, such as Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (English Heritage, 2008), Streets for All (English Heritage, 2004), Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (English Heritage, 2011), Setting and Views (Historic England, 2015).
  - Berkswich Parish Council: Village Design Statement (2005).
  - Some works that could harm the character or appearance of the conservation area can be carried out under “permitted development rights”, which means that home owners do not need to apply for planning permission. Owners are

nevertheless encouraged to take heed of the special historic character and appearance of the area when carrying out these works.

### Maintenance and repair



Failure of pointing



Erosion of stonework and mortar

- 12.5 Generally properties in the conservation area are well maintained. The most significant concerns relate to lack of maintenance or inappropriate repair of the important boundary walls which could in due course threaten a special characteristic of the conservation area. Every effort should be made to repair these walls using the correct mortar and pointing techniques.
- 12.6 Where repairs are to be carried out to other historic properties and structures throughout the conservation area particular attention should be paid to using matching materials and techniques to ensure the special character of older buildings and of the village are safeguarded.

## **13 Boundary Revisions and Amendments**

- When Walton on the Hill Conservation Area was designated in 1977 boundaries were drawn to include some roadside hedges and garden walls but not the full curtilage of the adjacent property. This has led to some confusion in interpreting the precise line of the conservation area boundary in some locations. In preparing the Conservation Area Appraisal a review of the boundary was undertaken. This concluded that some boundary revisions would help clarify interpretation of the boundaries of the designated area and also more accurately reflect the extent of the area of special character.
- To this end the western boundary of the conservation area has been extended from the junction of The Village with Village Gardens to the junction of The Village with Oldcroft Road and The Rise. The boundary line which formerly ran just behind the front walls and garden hedges of a number of houses in Village Gardens and Congreve Close which front the Village, and a larger number fronting the south side of The Village has now been amended to encompass the whole curtilage of these properties.
- There are no other significant changes to the original boundary.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1 - List entry for No 14 The Village**

Cottage. C17 with late C18 and C20 additions and alterations. Brick and timber-framed with brick nogging. C20 concrete tile roof, with 2 brick ridge stacks. Single storey plus attic. 2 bay lobby-entry plan cottage with late C18 addition to the west, and C20 lean-to addition to east. Off-centre doorway with C20 door and gabled porch on brackets. To the right a single 2 light casement under segmental arched brick head. To the left a 3 light casement and beyond a 2 light casement under segmental arched brick head and beyond again a 2 light casement under a wooden lintel. Above a single C20 gabled casement, and to the left 2, 3 light raking dormers. Interior has timber stud partition walls, and intact timber framed external walls of the original cottage, 2 bressumer fireplaces and chamfered spine beams.

### **Appendix 2 - Further information**

- Victoria County History of Staffordshire. Vol V. 1959
- The Plan for Stafford Borough 2014
- National Planning Policy Framework. Department of Communities and Local Government. 2012
- Conservation Principles: Historic England 2008
- Planning Practice Guidance – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment 2014
- Streets for All – Historic England 2004
- Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management – Historic England 2016
- Making changes to heritage assets - Historic England Advice Note 2 2016
- The Setting of Heritage Assets – Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 - Historic England 2015
- Berkswich Village Design Statement. Berkswich Parish Council. 2005
- Staffordshire County Council. Historic Environment Record: Monument records for Walton on the Hill
- Staffordshire County Council. Historic Environment Record. Historic Environment Character Zone full reports for Berkswich Parish

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Early OS maps reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland:  
<http://maps.nls.uk/index.html>

Photos of The Old Vicarage , Nos 11-13 and No 14 The Village courtesy of Jim Foley.





